

New York State Retired Teachers' Association, Inc.

YORK STATE

SPRING 2017 No. 1 Vol. 65 *Quarterly Magazine*



Angelo Grande *CR
President's Message

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Kevin Mulligan
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Working together
to support and
strengthen the
quality of life for all
retired educators,
their families, and
communities.

I believe that spring will have arrived by the time you receive the spring YORK STATE.

Two of the most crucial issues that are facing our Association are **Membership** and our current **Financial Status**. We are embarking on a program to reduce costs without hurting the organization as a whole. We must work to get a balanced budget. In order to balance the budget, we must cut costs or increase revenue. We are making progress; in 2015 we took out \$165,000 from our assets and in 2016 we took only \$60,000 from our assets.

In March I sent out my President's Appeal Letter. To date the Appeal Letter has been a great success. **Don't forget to send in your donation.** Don't forget that your donation helps to support our Friendly Service, Community Service, and Health Care. Remember, NYSRTA is one of the few organizations that have worked for educational retirees and helped them maintain their retirement benefits throughout the years.

We are currently dealing with the issue of the **2017 Constitutional Convention**. This can hurt teachers, as well as all state employees. This Convention will hurt our pensions. There is talk that they may want to tax our Pensions and do away with Collective Bargaining. The public will be faced with the cost of millions of dollars to run this Convention. I suggest you vote NO on the ballot

in November, 2017 to have a Constitutional Convention. If you vote yes, this convention may run until 2019. We are still working with the Alliance of Public Employees and RPEA (Retired Public Employee Association) to stop the 2017 Constitutional Convention.

We also made another change. Our Executive Board Meeting this past March was held at the Syracuse/ Liverpool Holiday Inn. We found the new venue very accommodating and will have our future meetings at the new location. The Radisson in Utica, NY was unable to fill our needs.

I have also been investigating possible venues for our State Convention. I visited a convention center in Saratoga Springs, New York, but we found that it didn't meet our needs and it was more expensive. I also plan to visit the Courtyard Schenectady at Mohawk Harbor in early May to see if they can meet our Convention needs.

I would like to thank all the Zone Presidents and their members for all they do for NYSRTA.

I would also like to thank our staff at the Albany Office for their hard work and dedication. Thank you to: Kathi Bassett, Executive Office Manager, Debbie Barnes and Lillie Ruby.

Remember, Help Save NYSRTA.
Only you can make it happen.
UNITED WE STAND,
DIVIDED WE FALL.



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A “Letter to the Editor” published in The Press Republican in Plattsburgh, January 2017, from Kevin Mulligan, Vice President

To the Editor:

The January 5, 2017 editorial, “In My Opinion”, by Dr. Peter Galie and Christopher Bopst was democratically spirited in a utopian sort of way, but was seriously lacking in the truism of Albany politics. Their article focused on several, idealistic reasons favoring a Constitutional Convention in New York State that is scheduled for a referendum vote on November 7, 2017. A “yes” vote on the referendum would begin the two year process for a convention. A “no” vote ends the process for having a convention.

It was noted that the New York State Constitution has experienced 228 amendments since its inception

in 1894. The majority of those have been a result of legislative action by our elected officials. What they did not convey is that the latest cost estimate to hold a Constitutional Convention in New York State is \$340 million. That cost would be incurred by the taxpayers of New York State. They also failed to mention that most, if not all of the delegates to that convention would be made up of legislators, representatives of lobbying groups, and/or close associates of legislators. I need not remind the North Country that any Constitutional Convention would heavily favor New York City and the metropolitan area.

Their article inferred that a State

Convention would perhaps clean up the corruption in Albany. The New York State Legislature has always had the power to do that, but has repeatedly shied away from cleaning up the Senate and Assembly. Without question, we do have a democratic process that could ensure a “clean up” of the corruption in Albany, and that is to support and vote for legislators that will work tirelessly for that cause through legislative action. We cannot afford the “good old boys” of Albany to have a Constitutional Convention.

— Kevin Mulligan – Sr. Vice President of New York State Retired Teachers Association

Resolutions Committee Report, March 2017 Gayla LePage, Chair

I sent information out in February to all Zone Resolution Chairs and Presidents. I have not received any as of yet, but it is early. If you did not receive it, I am attaching the info here. If there are any questions, please contact me at luer913@hotmail.com.

SCHEDULE FOR PROPOSING RESOLUTIONS

All proposed resolutions must be submitted to the State Chair of the Resolutions Committee “thirty (30) days before the July Executive Committee Meeting”. The date of that meeting is July 18, 2017. Thirty days prior to that date is **Saturday, June 17, 2017**. I am asking for resolutions to be submitted by **June 14, 2017** so I can have time to prepare them for the meeting.

When submitting proposals, please adhere to all of the guidelines that are clearly spelled out on pp. 78-80 of the Leader’s Manual.

Each proposal should be on a separate page with the proper attestation and signed and dated by the Zone President at the top. Each proposal should specify which NYSRTA objective(s) is being addressed in the proposal. These are found in Article II of the Bylaws. A signed card must be sent to me (**189 County Route 16, North Bangor, NY 12966**) along with an electronically transmitted copy to luer913@hotmail.com.

Zones considering the submission of a proposed resolution should:

1. Examine, in depth, whether the intent (purpose, aim, action required, or the like) is clearly an expression of one or more to the Article II of the By-Laws. Is the intent something that should be expressed as a resolution, something that requires a By-Law change, something that necessitates action by the State Executive Com-

mittee, or a change by another committee or agency?

2. Research thoroughly the proposed resolutions.
3. Make certain the “Whereas” statements and the “Resolved” are clearly stated. This is extremely important as the Legislative Action Committee will return to us or table the unclear proposed resolutions.
4. Submit the proposed resolutions as early as your zone’s schedule permits, allowing time for review by the Zones’ Resolution Chairs as well as by appropriate NYSRTA committees.
5. Submit up to but no more than three (3) resolutions for consideration in a given year.



With heartfelt gratitude, my family and I wish to thank the Association, Friendly Service from the Zones, and so many friends for reaching out with the multitude of kind thoughts, love and expressions of sympathy at the loss of our granddaughter Air Force Staff Sgt. Alexandria Mae Morrow, 25 years old, following her death while deployed in Jordon. It was a tragic accident and leaves her husband, two small daughters, mother, siblings and many fellow Airman to grieve. She loved serving her country. Please keep each of our military in your prayers every day. They give so much to ensure our freedoms.

*~Carol Lord *CR*

DeCormier Financial Assistance, Imogene McKendrick *CR

Are you having difficulty “making ends meet” financially? Do you find that paying that bill for your latest visit to the doctor or dentist has prevented you from staying within your budget? Your membership in the New York State Retired Teachers’ Association (NYSRTA) allows you to be eligible to consider applying for a grant from one of two offered by the Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund.

Which grant should you choose? Read the following brief descriptions. Find the one that will best help you to meet your financial need, and then contact your Unit or Zone Friendly Service Chairperson or call the NYSRTA office (518) 482-3509 to obtain the grant application that you will need. Complete the application and send it to the designated address.

The **Robert R. DeCormier Memorial Trust Fund** offers two different types of grants. Guidelines for eligibility include: current and at least three years of membership in NYSRTA, a minimum of 15 years as a certified or non-certified staff member in an educational institution, or the member spouse of such a member or deceased member, and a financial need or special circumstances requiring financial aid.

A *Special Grant* offers a “lump sum” to Association and spousal members in financial need. It provides financial assistance for an unexpected, un-reimbursed expense such as a new roof, extensive dental work, or an unusually high utility bill. The amount of the grant is dependent upon the applicant’s shown need. Contact your Unit Friendly Service or the NYSRTA Office to re-

quest a DeCormier Trust Fund *Special Grant* application form. When the form is completed, send to: DeCormier Trust Fund - NYSRTA, 8 Airport Park Blvd., Latham, NY 12110-6414.

The *Monthly Stipend Grant* is for members who find themselves needing ongoing financial assistance in order to maintain their independence. A monthly stipend check, based upon the applicant’s need, is sent to the client for as long as the need for financial assistance is shown. A *Monthly Stipend Grant* application can be obtained from your Friendly Service Chairperson or from the NYSRTA Office. When it has been completed, send to DeCormier Trust Fund-NYSRTA, at 8 Airport Park Blvd., Latham, NY 12110-6414.

More information and application forms can be obtained from the NYSRTA website (www.nysrta.org).

Historian Committee’s Spring Readiness, Carol Lord *CR, Chair

Spring brings much activity around the state to our retired teachers and in each of the NYSRTA Zones. The Association Historians wish to record the events that happen as our members volunteer and work on projects that benefit the citizens and communities we live in. They want to chronicle the Zone meetings and to recognize members for their contributions to our organization, and to the area they live in. Please contact your Zone Historian with information that they can use. Thank you, Carol Lord *CR, State Historian.



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Central Zone

Mary Radloff, Public Relations Chair

All-Committee Day in April brought out elected officers and appointed committee chairs of both



Membership leaders share successes and failures

zone and county units. A brief business meeting was conducted by Zone President Barbara Finley. She announced the resignation of Tom Parsnick as VP of Legislation Action. A long and loyal advocate of issues important to retired educators, Tom has served not only in that capacity for the zone but also for Cayuga County and NYSRTA. We thank him for his service as well as his friendship. Ray Pitcher, of Oneida-Herkimer, stepped up and volunteered to serve in that capacity. How fortunate are we to have another willing worker! The group divided into small groups to discuss common goals, problems and solutions.

After lunch, the leader of each small breakout group reported on results of their discussions. All in all the All-Committee Day proved a worth-while event with many new ideas and projects in the works as members return to their county units. Members were supplied with the new recruitment posters developed by Albany and information cards for distribution that explain the meaning of the Constitutional Convention and what it could do to our Pension Plans.

Central Western Zone

Phyllis Dunlap, Public Relations Chair

Our condolences to Central Western Zone member, Carol Lord *CR, and her family on the loss of her granddaughter, Alexandria Mae Gleason Morrow, while on military deployment to Jordon. The 26 year old mother of two grew up in Dansville.

President, Vicki Universal, reported about Livingston County Retired Teachers' Association.

Snowbirds are heading north and the rest of us are putting away the winter gear for a few months. It's time for our spring luncheons-food and friends make a winning event and I hope many of you will join your counties' luncheons.

The fall New York State Retired Teachers' Association's Convention was successfully hosted by our Central Western Zone; especially our co-presidents, Jane Behnk and Sandy Kushner. It was a learning experience to new delegates. One issue facing the State is a decline in membership; and no one came forward to fill the vacancy for membership chair.

At the Livingston County Retired Teachers' Association spring luncheon members learned about President Vicki Universal's adventures exploring India's Golden Triangle complete with a Tiger Safari!

NYSTRA Walkers—How can you benefit your own well-being, and

support worthwhile causes in the local community, and raise awareness for our Association? Sign up to walk (or run) at a fundraising event. Wear a



CLICK HERE FOR ORDER FORM

NYSRTA Zone or county pin, hat or shirt. These stats are being used for publicity and Central Western Zone will receive recognition too.

Sheila Harp from Monroe County Retired Teachers' Organization tells us about the Book Review Group. The Book Review Group of the RTO meets from October through January and April through June to hear speakers talk about a book. Some months we hear an author give an account on his or her own book; other months, we hear a speaker talk about a book he or she read and enjoyed. We enjoyed the connoisseur, Jack Garner, talk about his book, *From My Seat on the Aisle: Movies and Memories*. Deborah L. Hughes, President and CEO of the Susan B. Anthony Museum and House, gave a very interesting presentation on Sue Monk Kidd's novel, *The Invention Wings*. It is an account of sisters, Sarah and Angeline Grimke, abolitionists from South Carolina. Dues are nominal and all are welcome to attend.



This picture submitted by Betty Weber Worden shows some of the Monroe County RTO Carolers taking a break between performances. The group was started about 30 years ago and usually visits our area nursing homes in the spring and during the winter holidays. The Carolers encourage clients to participate in their program by singing, ringing bells or using musical instruments. The group tries to visit nursing homes that house our members and usually reach an average of six to seven nursing homes each season. It is a very rewarding program and it is such a joy to hear them singing along with the Carolers.

Eastern Zone

Pamela Love, Public Relations

Most of the Eastern Zone Units will be meeting in May or June not only to socialize but to generate new and ongoing outreach projects in the community as well as giving scholarships to deserving high school seniors planning to pursue careers in the teaching profession as well as aiding active teachers in the community. Eastern Zone will be organizing the Eastern Zone Grant Committee which will be administrating the *Hudson-Kramer Memorial Grant* for our zone.

The *Hudson-Kramer Grant* was established to support and encourage still active teachers and administrators in New York State public schools. Starting in 2017, a grant for \$1,000 is for an innovative, special project or program, to be designed and implemented by an active teacher or administrator for use in the classroom, the school or the district. This grant is available to be given by our zone every other year.

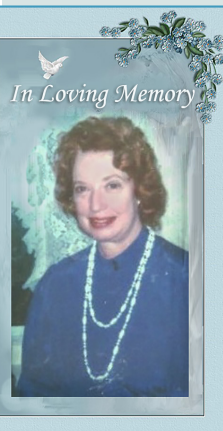
The Rensselaer Unit will be highlighted in this issue. President, Marge Leibowitz, said that the Rensselaer County Retired Teachers will be meeting on June 14th to have a business meeting and to socialize at a luncheon. The Scholarship Committee, headed by Deborah Lyman, will be giving a \$500 Scholarship to a Rensselaer County high school senior who



is planning a career in the teaching profession. Those attending the luncheon meeting are asked to bring pet food or other pet items which can be donated to an animal shelter in the community. Also, plans are going to be made for a fitness walk in the fall.

On a sad note, Eastern Zone lost a very active and car-

ing member on April 15, 2017. Joan T. Gallagher passed away as a result of pancreatic cancer, her third major cancer in 15 years. Joan was President of the Schaharie Unit for the last six years and was very active with Eastern Zone for many years. When an active teacher, Joan was on the team that brought NYSTA



resources to the bargaining table which promoted and allowed collective bargaining and negotiations for teachers in New York State. Joan's full obituary, can be found here: http://www.langanfuneralhome.com/memsol.cgi?user_id=1953815

An Interview with Stella Courtney

Mary Ellen Johnson, Schenectady County Retired Teachers Association (SCRTA) historian

Although, in our lifetime each of us add a line or two to our nation's ongoing historical narrative and occasionally, one individual contributes a whole paragraph. Stella Crockett Courtney was one of those trailblazers who helped change our country for the better when she became the first African-American to graduate from Texas Tech in 1965, after attending four consecutive years (1961-1965). Many of you may have viewed her on a recent segment of WNYT's Elaine Houston's regular evening program when Stella was featured as one of "Capital Region Women Who Helped Make Civil Rights History." [Click HERE to view video.](#)

Stella Crockett grew up in a hard-working and religious family in Lubbock, Texas during the era of segregation and "separate, but equal" schools and public facilities. Living in the African-American section of the city,

she attended all black schools taught by an all-black faculty. These dedicated teachers inspired her desire to attend college and become a teacher herself. Her full scholarship to the historically black Langston University in Oklahoma would have given her a free education. However, that summer, after her graduation from high school, the announcement that Texas Tech in Lubbock would finally begin accepting African-Americans for fall classes changed her plans. A diploma from this highly rated university was an asset in any career. When her high school band director contacted her, urging her to apply, her parents also agreed that she should go to Tech. This was a huge financial sacrifice for them with the cost of \$300 per semester, a very sizable sum in 1961 dollars.



As Stella began her freshman year at Tech, there were only a tiny handful of other African-Americans on a campus with over 2,750 white students. She faced little overt hostility, but fellow white students generally kept their distance, refusing to sit next to her in classrooms unless no other seat was available. One of her worst experiences happened early on, when, as she sat in the front row, the first day of her psychology class, the professor used the N-word as part of his lecture. Stella dropped the course, figuring she had no future there. During her four years at Tech she found that some professors were "real ugly and mean," while others were grudgingly accepting, and a few as "nice as sweet potato pie."

Stella was one of the few African-American students who played in Texas Tech's band. When the band was honored and invited to play at newly elected Governor Connolly's inauguration in Austin, the two or



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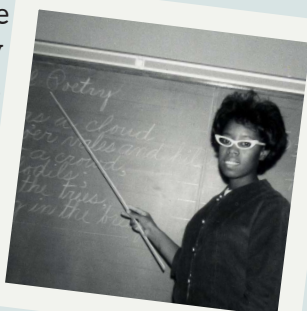
three black women in the band were notified they could ride on the bus, but could not stay in the same hotel as the white band members. The black women decided not to go. Stella can't remember ever traveling out of town with the band. She performed only on their home field.

Another, never to be forgotten incident, was being in the cafeteria sitting at a table with some fellow African-American students when the announcement of President Kennedy's death was made. A group of white, male students jumped up, cheering and shouting, "Thank God, the N-lover is dead."

Because dorms were not yet integrated for a few years, Stella commuted back and forth from home. Despite unpleasant experiences, her focus was on completing her degree.

Texas Tech's 1965 commencement ceremony was the first to award a diploma to an African-American student who had spent all four years there as an undergraduate. Stella recalls, "I felt really good that I made the achievement. It was a milestone for me and my family."

The Lubbock public school system offered her a teaching job, which she declined. During student teaching, Stella discovered she had a real aptitude in reaching special needs and challenged youngsters. Her supervising teacher encouraged her to teach special education. This led to a 43 year career teaching elementary special education. Leaving Texas, she began teaching in Albuquerque, NM. There she met her husband. They relocated to Michigan where they worked on additional college degrees. They went to Rhode Island where a change of pace found her work-



ing with young adults with special needs. The next move was to Rochester N.Y., and finally, to Clifton Park, where she still lives today. This brought her to the Schenectady City School System teaching elementary special education. She was assigned to several of the city's elementary schools during her 33 years in the district.

Now that she is retired, Stella continues to work with children and adults as the Sunday School Superintendent of St. Johns Church of God in Christ. She and her husband have celebrated their 50th anniversary. They enjoy the company of their two children.

An annual trip to Texas allows her to connect with extended family and catch up on what's going on at Texas Tech. Just recently, she has been recognized at her alma mater for her pioneering breakthrough at the university, by being featured in a special diversity exhibit at Texas Tech's



Southwest Collection Library. This exhibit highlighted people who have helped to create the institution's diversity. For her contributions to both civil rights, and in the field of education, Stella's photograph, a description of her accomplishments and her oral history are part of the display. Interviewed for two lengthy articles in the Daily Toreador, the school's student newspaper, she noted, "I never thought it would be as integrated as it is today."

SCRTA is honored to have Stella Courtney as our Assistant President, a woman who was not only a dedicated educator, but also a Texas civil rights pioneer.

Long Island Zone

Eileen Holmes, Public Relations

"Lo, the winter has passed, and the flowers appear upon the earth..." and we are all thankful for the warm spring weather! After a winter lull, the LIZ Executive Board met in April to plan events for the coming year. We are looking forward to the Spring luncheon in May with a guest speaker from "The Book Fairies", a Long Island based group that collects and distributes gently used books for ages birth through adult. We will be working with "The Book Fairies" as a Community Service project.

The West End Retired Teachers held their Spring luncheon/meeting on March 8th and thankfully, it was a warm day, without snow! Their guest speaker from "Flowers by Voegler" had to cancel her presentation because of a death in the family but she graciously had five floral arrangements delivered to be used for a raffle, and flowers for everyone present!

Last November WERTA's fall luncheon/meeting featured Martha Kolodkin, a retired Social Studies teacher, as guest speaker. Martha's program was called "As Seen through the President's Keyhole" and presents many unknown Presidential facts. Everyone was informed, surprised and so entertained as Ms. Kolodkin went from George Washington to Bill Clinton that the presentation which was scheduled for thirty minutes lasted for ninety!

The East End Retired Teachers held their Election Day lunch on Wednesday, November 9th and the day after an evening of watching the presidential returns, members were ready for a nice lunch, a chance to share NYSRTA convention news and a spirited sing-a-long led by EERTA members Jim and Diana Davis. "This Land is My Land" and other favorites had everyone joining in the songfest!

In December, EERTA Vice President Agnes Dansereau organized a Christmas party, complete with a visit from Santa, grab bag gifts, a raffle, 50/50 drawing and another wonderful sing-a-long led by the Davies'. Along with all the favorite holiday songs, Agnes introduced a new version of "The 12 Days of Christmas-Italian Style" and everyone had a great time singing about



**Sing-a-long leaders
Jim and Diana Davis**



**EERTA Vice-President
Agnes Dansereau with
Jim and Diana Davis**



**Shelter Island Town
Director Virginia Schultz
(front) with luncheon
guests Suzanne and
Frank Jessup and Marie
Buscemi**

meatballs, calzone pizza, and a big bowl of Parmesan cheese!

Later in December, Shelter Island Town Director Virginia Schultz held her annual covered dish luncheon for E E R T A members. Except for the 'native' Islanders, those attending must take a ferry to get there and we have become experts at arranging carpools and 'hitching a ride' while carrying dishes and trays of food to share!

North Central Zone

**Nancy Roberts & Patricia Newell,
Public Relations Co-Chairs**

Spring rushes in on enthusiastic wings! NCZ members are also off and running with activities.

Under the direction of NCZ & State Community Service Chair, Patricia Dietrich, with Burt Phillips *CR serving as the event coordinator, enthusiastic NCZ volunteers will assist with the WPBS-TV's *Ready, Set, Fun 2017 Book Fest*. This literacy celebration will take place on May 13th at the Bruce M. Wright Conference Center in Watertown.

Plans are underway for our

Spring Scholarship Luncheon to be held on June 6th at the Ramada Inn in Watertown. A highlight of this luncheon will be the awarding of two \$1,000 scholarships to deserving high school seniors. Our Scholarship Chairman, John Gaffney, and his committee have the challenging task of reviewing applications and making the final selections. John is assisted by Dr. George Forbes, Marianne Malatino, Willis Haller, Tom Van Emmerik, and Bruce & Candice Buckingham. NCZ is proud to present these scholarships in partnership with the Northern New York Community Foundation.



We are pleased to announce that this year's winners are William Beyer, graduating senior from Lowville Academy & Central School, and Martina Leake, a senior from Carthage Central School. These outstanding students and their parents will be our invited guests at the June 6th luncheon.

We are delighted that Gene Bavis, a retired social studies teacher from Wayne Central, will be our featured speaker on June 6th.

Accompanied by his wife, Liz, Gene will present "Mural Mania". You may remember this unique art/history presentation from the 2016 NYSRTA Convention in Verona. Gene has traveled throughout the United States and Canada exploring and photographing murals. This presentation which celebrates local history and community pride will be of great interest to our members.

Linda Holley and Patty Crandall,



our Hospitality Co-Chairs, are busy overseeing luncheon details. They are gracious hostesses who leave their signature trademark on the luncheon tables with fresh flowers from their gardens. Pat Dietrich will organize several community service projects at our spring luncheon and NCZ members will be able to purchase raffle tickets for "Love Your Public Library." A drive for the Jefferson County food pantry will also be underway. This worthy cause is always supported very generously by our members.

Date to Remember:

***Summer Executive Council Meeting**
Thursday, August 3, 2017, at BOCES
Admin Building, 10-12noon

Northeastern Zone

Marti Martin, Public Relations Chair

NEZ Members are encouraged to save the date! 2017 marks the 65th Anniversary Year of the Northeastern Zone of NYSRTA!! Planning for the festivities on September 7th has begun! A sneak preview tells me that certain individuals will be recognized for their exemplary service. In addition, there will be special entertainment, door prizes, raffles, a silent auction and a delicious meal. Look for further details as the date draws near. We are asking active members to give a call to former colleagues to see if they are planning to attend, offer them a ride to the event, or even offer to go Dutch treat. Which school district in our area will be best represented?

Our Membership Chair, Sandy Lashua, reports a total of 584 members. 381 of them are active members who pay their individual yearly



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membership fee of \$30. The most startling fact is that there are 170 individuals under the age of 90 who are **life members!** These folks previously paid a one-time fee which is an option when renewing membership or when joining as a new member. NEZ boasts of the 18 folks who are in their 90's and 2 who are centenarians! At age 90, retirees no longer pay dues. They have earned this benefit through their dedicated membership. Congratulations!! One goal for the upcoming 65th Anniversary Year of NEZ NYSRTA is to get those who are not active due payers back involved in our great organization.

Can you imagine if the entire membership decided to show up at the Anniversary party? What a shindig that would be!!

NEZ is known for its entertainment! At the December meeting, Ron Wilson introduced the Gospel Choir from SUNY Plattsburgh comprised of both students and community members. There was an opportunity for enjoying the beauty of the harmonic voices, rejoicing and singing along with the seasonal music they chose.

On June 9th, at 11 am, at the Holiday Inn in Plattsburgh NEZ NYSRTA members and Champlain Valley Retiree Council members from the NYSUT retiree group, will have a joint luncheon meeting to hear the Board President of the New York State Teacher Retirement System, David Keefe, speak on the topic of the solvency of our retirements. This is a very important topic to many of us who might have concerns about the future of our pensions.

In early 2017, there was a Rally For Education held in downtown Plattsburgh at the MacDonough Monument. Afterwards, there was



an opportunity for educators to get together for round table talks at the local NYSUT office to discuss concerns. There was a crowd of about 60 people at the rally and about half of that number met afterwards. It is known that active teachers have a difficult time attending events in the evening due to their family obligations and their preparations for the classroom the next day, so it was no surprise that most of those in attendance were retirees, and NYSRTA members at that! The discussions focused on how schools are perceived and what activities could enhance those perceptions. Days and weeks later, article after article appeared in the Press Republican highlighting many of the innovative programs that our local school districts are implementing.

In that vein, this spring, NYSRTA offered a \$1000 memorial grant in the name of public school teachers Ross C. Hudson and Florence Coulter Kramer. *The Hudson-Kramer Grant* opportunity is open to active educators who have an innovative project or program they would like to implement in their classroom or school building. Notification of the grant and applications were sent out to each school district in Clinton and Essex counties through the District Office of Dr. Mark Davey at BOCES. In addition, the information and applications were sent to a teacher association representative. The deadline for submission was May 5th. At the time of this publication, 6 applications have been received, and others were on their way. The winner will be announced at the June 9th NEZ meeting and the successful applicant will be recognized. Those of us on the committee are looking forward to reading the applications and finding out what kinds of creative, innovative projects these educators have in mind for their students.

Northern Zone

Linda Crosby, Public Relations Chair

In the North Country, the brilliant greens of newly born grass and emerging buds just peeking out on our trees are truly special gifts as I experience them for a second time after spending Easter week with family in the Southern Zone where Spring arrived a bit earlier; or should I call that re-gifting? Hopefully, it's a sign that double the fun awaits us all this year. With enthusiastic input from our Executive Board, our President, Gayla LePage, has completed work on a new letter to NZ membership; the letter was designed with the hope that our members will be encouraged to more actively participate in our zone activities. We would love to meet new members, but, we also need the kind help and critical support of our current members. Please join us at the next Executive Board Meeting or at the NZ Annual Spring Membership Meeting on May 24, 2017 (special presentation by the director of the Massena Boys and Girls Club). We invite you to attend the NYSRTA 2017 Annual Convention on Oct.30, 31, Nov. 1 at the Turning Stone Casino, Verona, NY and assist our Northern Zone in hosting the festivities. We always have a great time at the convention.

Our 2017 Convention Co-Chairs, Alice Galvin and Gayla LePage, have lined up a wonderful keynote speaker, Maggie Wheeler (a Cornwall, Ontario author) and exciting workshops reflecting the "wild treasures" of the North Country. Our own NZ members, Holly Chorba (retired Science teacher/Principal/avid photographer and traveler) and Mary Scharf (retired Spanish teacher/travel agency owner/jewelry artisan/politician) will present workshops; look forward to these dynamic ladies who really know how to throw a "wild" party!

Rae Louise Tate and I traveled to Liverpool, NY to attend the March State Executive Board meeting. Our state colleagues presented impres-

sive reports on many topics including legislative action (state and federal), marketing and membership, and the upcoming November vote on the NYS Constitutional Convention. Please read more about these important issues in *YORK STATE*. Watch and read your local media. Consult the NYS Alliance for Retired Americans website for more details, and educate yourself before casting your votes this fall.

NZ Health Care Chair, Joe Russo, is our contact person for the NYSRTA Walkers program; submit your mileage to him every three months. He will report results and special walking events information to the state. Joe suggests using the My Fitness app on a smartphone. NYSRTA Walker T-shirts are available. As Clifton-Fine-Edwards Unit President, Joe reported that nine Banner and Light Committee members prepared wreaths and banners to festively decorate Route 3 this past winter. With their always spirited camaraderie, CFE Unit members enjoyed their annual Christmas party in December at The Pine Cone Grill in Wanakena. They welcome all NZ members every year.

Northern Zone has received 17 applications for the 2017 NYSRTA Hudson-Kramer Memorial Grant (\$1,000) from Franklin and St. Lawrence Co. public school teachers. Our grant committee members will soon announce the name of the grant recipient to our communities as judging is presently underway. Look for details about this and our high school scholarship winner in the next *YORK STATE*. Many thanks to our H-K grant committee members: Jean Theobald (Potsdam), Joanne Laitinen (Gouverneur), Tom Cook (Cha-teaugay), and Linda Crosby (Malone). The committee was very impressed by the professional preparation, enthusiastic effort and serious content displayed by the applicants when describing their projects/programs. It

was gratifying that many of our active teachers were so thrilled about the grant that they immediately responded with questions and application submissions

Looking Back!



Author Michael Keene autographs his book on 19th C. women serial killers for NZ President Gayla LePage at the 2016 convention.



NZ members Alice Galvin, Doug Theobald and Jean Theobald prepare to vote at the 2016 convention. Make sure you are educated and prepared for all the important upcoming Fall 2017 votes!

Looking Forward!



After Easter, NZ member Alice Galvin visited NZ Past President Donna Finnerty*CR at her residence in Endicott, NY. She is feeling well and loves to receive cards from friends in NZ.

Southern Zone

Mary Lou Wood, SZ President

Isn't spring great? Our friends are back from the South! This is good time to socialize, exercise, and take those little day trips to see what our state and country have to offer. Some of us took a trip to Montour Falls, Watkins Glen, and Ithaca to enjoy the grandeur of the waterfalls. Just beautiful!

The Southern Zone executive committee met in April to discuss pertinent information for our retirees. Mary Lou Wood, SZ president, informed members of topics discussed at the State Executive Board meeting in March. Papers were sent to the SZ unit presidents with information on the Constitution Convention to be passed onto their respective members. Mary Johnson, SZ legislator, would like our members to keep informed of state rules, regulations, and laws and to introduce ourselves to our local representatives. Don Cutton and his team will be choosing an educator who will be the recipient of our SZ scholarship. This scholarship will be awarded in June.

The Corning Area Retired Teachers Association will be hosting the Southern Zone Annual Meeting. It will be held on September 20th at the American Legion in Corning. Our speaker will be Katherine Larson, the Curatorial Assistant from Corning Museum of Glass. Hope you will join us.

Enjoy your summer, keep cool, drink plenty of water, stay active, socialize, and get outside to smell the flowers and hear the birds sing. If you get a chance, take a day trip to see one of NYS beautiful waterfalls. They're awesome.





Front Row: Mary Lou Wood, President SZ; Linda Moore, President Schulyer Retired Teachers; Lois Cutton, SZ Treasurer; Lynne Hunkovic, Co-president. Eastern Broome Branch; Back Row: Mary Johnson, SZ Federal/State Legislation; Don Cutton, Scholarship; Vince Smith, VP of Membership; Bonnie Stratton, SZ Secretary; Imogene McKendrick, SZ Friendly Service; Nancy Spaulding, President Elmira Retired Teachers Association



In Loving Memory

John Pittelli, (SZ) passed away in March. As many of you know, John was a regular attendee and delegate to the NYSRTA conventions, having served our organization as a member of the Legislative Action Committee, and as Parliamentarian for the Southern Zone. A teacher his entire career, he also served as the longtime President of the Binghamton Teacher's Association, and the WBET (Western Broome/Eastern Tioga Unit). In addition to being a delegate for NYSRTA, John was also a delegate to NEA/NY. A veteran and strong supporter of the military, John served in the US Navy during the Korean Conflict. He resided in Johnson City, N.Y., most of his adult life, and more recently resided in Satellite Beach, Fla., with his wife, Patricia Dunham. He was preceded in death by his brother, Frank Pittelli; and sister, Rose Millian.

Western Zone

Michelle Claus, Public Relations Chair

Western Zone Teacher, Named Outstanding NYSCATE Teacher for 2016—Submitted by: Patricia Keller and Michelle Claus

NYSCATE is the New York State Computer and Technology Education organization. This NYS organization of over 20,000 technology using educators and administrators are committed to transforming teaching and learning. This award was presented to Michael Drezek at their annual meeting in Rochester this past November.

Michael is a graduate of St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute of Buffalo and received his undergraduate degree from Geneseo and his Master's in Education Technology from Buffalo State. Mr. Drezek has been employed by the Lake Shore Central District for 12 years. The first ten years he taught middle school 8th grade math. His use of technology provided different and creative ways to teach and students more opportunities to learn.

Lake Shore was given a Teacher Leader Effectiveness Grant three years ago. This grant was used to create a Technology Integration Teaching position, which Michael Drezek accepted. This position covers the five buildings, and all levels of instruction, including special needs. In addition to his teaching/technology duties, Michael is the advisor for the Middle School Computer Science Club.

Michael is quoted to say "Winning this award is a great achievement in my career. Our students are incorporating the latest technology in many of their classes, and I look forward to going to work each day and helping them make the most of it."



We believe Michael has summed up the teaching profession and the passion teachers have to educate. This program is so successful at Lake Shore because the teachers open their classroom doors, willing to explore teaching and learning through technology. Technology opens the world to these students.

Western Zone's BEST Teachers and Educators—Submitted by: Michelle Claus

The news in Western New York abounds with teachers and educators honored for their creative and innovative styles of teaching this 2016 school year. Another section of this newsletter has an article about Michael Drezek, the New York State Computer and Technology Educator of the year 2016. Please take time to read it.

This article is about another winner, Colleen McNamara. During her student teaching semester, Colleen taught at an orphanage in Ghana, Africa. At one point in her Alexander Central School District employment, Colleen visited the Ron Clark Academy and studied the methods used to educate and teach. Colleen was given the 2016 Educator of the Year Buffalo award this year from Educators of America. They have given awards nationally for the past two years.

Educators of America, recognizes the determination of these professionals who understand the need for the integration of technology and education to increase student understanding and achievement. They will accept nominations for the 2017 Educator of the year beginning this November. Colleen was nominated for this 2016 award by several people including, students, co-workers, SUNY Geneseo Student Teaching Coordinators, her past student teachers, and family.

Their fifth grade is called the 5th Grade Academy, and Colleen is one

of these three teachers who make up the Academy. The Alexander School District was given an "in-service" by Ms. McNamara

as to what the 5th Grade Academy was all about. Colleen's class has a stage and a runway which allows her and the students to be higher above

the class so all eyes are focused during lessons and presentations. Students also stand to answer questions and give explanations. There is much singing, chanting, using music, imagination and moving to keep learning exciting. Ms. McNamara's goal is to grab their attention, engage her students, and keep it. This teacher coordinated the school districts at-

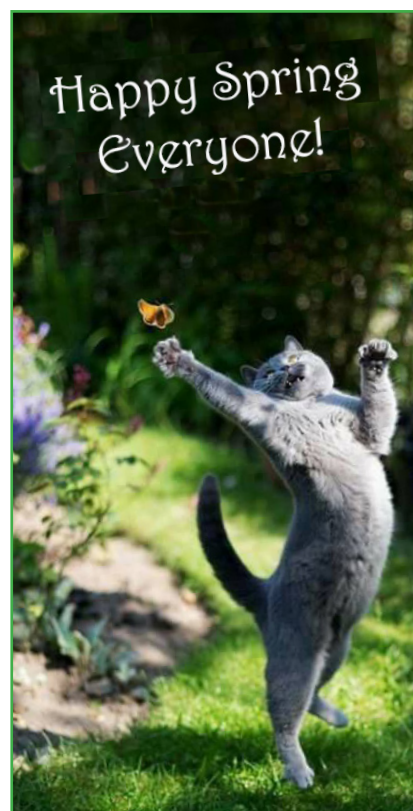


tempt to set three world records after researching the Guinness Book of World Records. No world records,

but the community, students, and district were brought together by the activity. McNamara started the student council, chess club, and a teacher book study group. A mobile computer lab has

also been given to her school, and the technology director in Alexander is helping teachers integrate this lab into the school district's educational programs.

We have an abundance of exceptional teachers in Western New York. We hope this article has put a smile on your face and a couple of thoughts of your past teaching days.



"I could not have imagined that my future necessitated hearing aids in both ears. I contacted Hear In America, and with their assistance WOW! WOW! WOW! It was smooth sailing through the entire process. It's a whole new world: my life is better!"

- R.C.

To register for your family's free hearing benefits including discounts, extra warranties and even free hearing aid batteries, **call Hear In America at 1-800-286-6149.**



■ Bylaws, William Tenity, Chair

The Bylaws Committee is presenting four proposed bylaws changes for consideration at the 2017 Annual Meeting in October. All four of them were approved by the Executive Board at its March meeting. A summary of the four propositions follows. The 2017 propositions have been posted on the web site at www.nysrta.org/bylaws, along with an updated copy of the complete NYSRTA Bylaws (also on the NYSRTA Facebook page). Four of the propositions are hold-overs from the 2016 Annual Meeting. The delegates accepted two at that time, while one was tabled and the delegates voted one down. Due to a technicality, no actions on bylaws taken at that meeting had validity and therefore must be presented again. I wish to thank the members of the committee for all of the hard work and time they have put into preparing these propositions.

The Bylaws Committee recommends approval of all four propositions.

Respectfully submitted,

William Tenity, Chair, Bylaws Committee

Committee Members:

President Emeritus Tom Campany *CR

Diane Hahn *CR

Helen Hoering

Burt Phillips *CR

Proposition MD (Member Disqualification) 2017

This proposition allows the association to deny membership to anyone who has been convicted of a crime that, under New York State Education Law, would have barred him/her from holding State Education Department Certification as an Educator, whether or not he/she actually holds such certification. This covers all three classes of membership: Educator, Associate, and Spouse.

Proposition ENLM (Eliminate New Life Memberships) 2017

This proposition removes the option of new Life Memberships as a cost saving measure. Present Life memberships in good standing would not be eliminated.

Proposition RUVEM (Remove Unanimous Vote Requirement at Electronic Meetings) 2017

This proposition was initiated after a review of our bylaws with SAANYS attorney Wendy S. DeForge, Esq., who said that it was not in compliance with the New York State Not-For-Profit Corporation Law. This makes sure that the Bylaw that was passed in 2015 is in compliance with the law.

Proposition NFPLC (Not For Profit Law Compliance) 2017

This proposition allows voting-enabled substitutes for all members of the Executive Board not already covered by the current bylaws. Legal advice has revealed to us that the NYSRTA Bylaws are not presently in compliance with Not-For-Profit Law in that we do not have the required functioning Board of Directors. Proposition NFPLC 2017 will accomplish the mission while rectifying the legal compliance issue with the NFPL.

■ Health Care Committee Report, Gwynne Bodle, Coordinator

For this article I am returning to a subject I brought forth a couple years ago. It has come to my attention that there is still a problem with admittance status when hospitalization becomes a necessity. When entering a hospital, it is very important to be sure

you are classified as an in-patient or an out-patient. If you are not an in-patient and remain in

the hospital for observation, you run the risk of not being covered by in-

surance or Medicare for some procedures and follow up care.

It was also brought to my attention that you or your designated representative may be asked to sign that you are an out-patient. This should not be done. Once that designation is made you might not think about it and it will never be changed. I was also informed that one patient was admitted as in-patient and later asked to sign a paper with the designation out-patient!!! This also needs to be monitored.

Please be careful about anything you are asked to sign – read it carefully and don't get caught. If you don't understand – DO NOT SIGN until you get answers to any and all questions. AARP and Medicare.gov are excellent sources for

you to check and get those answers. I encourage you to check these sources and learn your rights. Also your Medicare Book contains much of what you need to know – **Read It.** If you still need assistance, I would be glad to assist in any way.

Another concern for many of us is scams. I have learned that possible assistance is available through the State Attorney General. Speakers are available to organizations to give information to citizens. I would encourage you to use this resource and learn how to protect yourself and your fellow Association members.

**Inpatient
or
Outpatient?**

■ Membership Report, Salvatore Sedita *CR, VP for Membership

As of this writing, the total organization membership continues to decrease, although recent efforts on the part of all of our zones has slowed that decrease significantly.

By this time, our zones and units have reached out to this current year's retirees. As all of you know, that is just the beginning of the work.

From the recent meetings of Zone Membership Chairs, there has been universal agreement that the two factors that are most effective in recruiting new members are the following:

First, the job is so big that it cannot be done effectively by one or two people. The greater the number of members involved in contacting and recruiting new members, the more successful the recruitment

campaign is. It is essential that every member become involved and active in the recruitment of new members. New member recruitment is everyone's obligation.

Secondly, the most effective recruitment technique is personal contact and follow-up of each potential new member by a current member. A recruitment campaign that involves an individual member being responsible to work with a potential new member and convince him/her to become a member is

always successful.

At this time, I am calling upon each member of NYSRTA to contact your unit or zone membership chair and let him/her know that you are able and willing to become actively involved in bringing in at least one new member to the organization this year.

I am looking forward to reporting at the Convention in October that our organization's membership has turned the corner and is now growing. I will be able to do that when each of you has done your part.



Submission Deadlines for YORK STATE

Spring (electronic) . Apr 30

Summer (mailed)Jul 13

Fall (electronic)Aug 25

Winter (mailed)Nov 4

A Dental HMO for the Members of NYSRTA

NYSRTA Dental Insurance
Underwritten by Cigna Dental

This NYSRTA Sponsored Dental program is a Dental HMO that lets you pick a network dentist who provides you with most routine services at no charge to you (exams, x-rays, and cleanings).

There are no waiting periods, deductibles, or annual dollar maximums.

Cigna's network of participating dentists focus on the preventive aspects of dental care. Your network general dentist will manage your overall dental care, and provide referrals for more complex procedures requiring a dental specialist.

All network dentists are required to meet Cigna Dental's quality program criteria. They have been evaluated for professional credentials and compliance with government health standards. Offices are visited periodically to verify that all standards are being met, providing an ongoing endorsement of quality.

To enroll or request more information, contact an insurance representative at 1-866-478-8907.

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Legislative Action: Mary Johnson and Gary Germain, Co-Vice Presidents for Legislative Action

The Legislative Action Committee met on March 26 and 27 in Syracuse to finalize the selection of legislative priorities for 2017. The legislative agenda was approved on March 28 by the Executive Board. The legislative priorities were the offshoots of resolutions passed at the October convention. And these same issues were discussed during our Legislative Action conference call in January.

Two of our state legislative priorities continue to be the Minimum Pension Bump Up and a bill to Improve Pension Cola. Our state campaign card also includes the following statement: *Over the years, we have had the pleasure of meeting with our local legislators and advocating for many issues. We have found them to be honest and ethical. We ask these same legislators to enact ethics reform*

ills that would remove and punish any colleagues whose actions jeopardize the trust and respect earned by the majority of elected representatives. NYSRTA supports meaningful ethics reform through the passage of legislation and referendum process.

At the Federal level, we have also decided to pursue three bills that we have been advocating for several years. These include the following: Negotiation of Covered Medical Part D Covered Drugs. This bill would allow the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate with drug companies to reduce drug prices. We are also advocating a bill for Strengthening Social Security and Medical Trust Fund. This bill supports an increase to the average beneficiary, of \$800 per year. It would also change the cost-of-living calculations to reflect the living expenses of social se-



curity beneficiaries. The third bill we are advocating for (Observation vs. inpatient for coverage under Medicare) deals with the status of a patient under hospital care. A person whose status is "under observation" may not be covered under Medicare for any subsequent followup care in a skilled nursing facility. It is imperative that one be admitted as "inpatient" to be covered by Medicare.

Also while in Syracuse, Mary Johnson, Gary Germain and Bill Lesniak visited the offices of Senators Schumer and Gillibrand. We were well received by the staff members of both Senators and informed that they support our legislative causes.

Workshop Committee Update, Kevin Mulligan, Sr. Vice President and Workshop Committee Chairperson

The Workshop Committee has been very busy since the last day of Convention 2016. The host zone for the 2017 Convention is the Northern Zone, led by Zone President Gayla Le Page and Alice Galvin, and have chosen their theme for Convention 2017 - "Wild Treasures: A Journey through the North Country". The Keynote Speaker, Maggie Wheeler will present "The St. Lawrence Seaway: A Moving History".

The Workshop Committee consists of the following members: Diane Hahn*CR (Eastern Zone), Gwynne Bodle (Central Zone), Pat Newell (North Central Zone), Doris Kirsch*CR (Western Zone), Alice Galvin



Keynote Speaker,
Maggie Wheeler

and Gayla Le Page (Northern Zone) serve as co-members. Jane Behnk and Sandy Kushner (Central Western Zone) serve as consultants along with Kathi Bassett and President Angelo Grande *CR. This year we welcome some members of Western Zone who serve as auditors, and they are: John Cardarella, Michelle Claus, Russell Gervasi, Beth Green and Nancy White. Only the five members can vote, but experience and insight from the others has been greatly appreciated.

We are very pleased to announce that David Keefe, Chairperson for New York State Teacher Retirement System will give a presentation at the Tuesday (October 31) Convention

Luncheon. His address will focus on the upcoming Constitutional Convention Referendum taking place on November 7, 2017. As in the past the NYS Teacher Retirement System will give their annual workshop presentation during the 2nd session of workshops.

I remind all NYSRTA members that the likelihood of a Constitutional Convention is still very real. The recent approval of the late State Budget is a testament to the movement to use a Constitutional Convention to remove the corruption in Albany. The reality exists that many of the same state legislators, both corrupt and not, will serve as delegates to that convention. We are also confronted with a possible taxpayer burden of up to \$340 million to pay for that Constitutional Convention.



NYSRTA presents...

Tuscan and Umbrian Countryside

11 days, 16 meals • **October 7 – 17, 2017** • **Booking #750696**

Highlights: Rome, Orvieto, Spoleto, Cooking Class, Montefalco, Bevagna, Olive Oil Factory, Home-Hosted Lunch, Assisi, Winery, Florence, Siena, Monteriggioni, Volterra, Guarnacci Museum, San Gimignano

Double: \$4,699*

National Parks of America

12 days, 16 meals • **September 9 – 20, 2017** • **Booking #750723**

Highlights: Scottsdale, Lake Powell, Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion, Salt Lake City, Jackson Hole, Grand Teton & Yellowstone National Parks, Old Faithful, Sheridan, Bighorn Mountains, Mount Rushmore, Crazy Horse Memorial

Double: \$4,279* Book by 3/9/17 and **SAVE \$100** per person!**

**BOOK NOW
& SAVE UP TO \$200
per person****

China Highlights

9 days, 16 meals • **November 6 – 14, 2017** • **Booking #749397**

Highlights: Forbidden City, The Great Wall, Temple of Heaven, Rickshaw Tour, Yuyuan Garden, The Bund, Shanghai Museum, Acrobatics Show

Double: \$3,349* Book by 5/7/17 and **SAVE \$200** per person!**

Airfare included from NYC! Other gateways available, call for rates and more information.

To learn more or reserve your seat, call **800.581.8942** and refer to the booking number above. Or visit our website at www.nysrta.org/travel-tour-packages/

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*Rates are per person and include roundtrip air from NYC (Other gateways are available upon request), air taxes and fees/surcharges, and hotel transfers. Airfare: For your convenience, we offer airfare for purchase with all tour packages. If you purchase an air-inclusive program, your airfare will be quoted inclusive of all fuel, taxes and fees. Your rates are subject to change until paid in full. Seats are limited and may not be available on every flight or departure date. Checked Baggage Charges: Some airlines may impose additional charges if you choose to check any baggage. Please contact your airline or refer to its website for detailed information regarding your airline's checked baggage policies. **Book by savings valid on air-inclusive bookings only. Call for rate after book by date. CST# 2006766-20 UBN# 601220855 Nevada Seller of Travel Registration No. 2003-0279



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